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C O N F I D E N T I A L ABIDJAN 000523

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SUBJECT: PRESIDENTIAL DECREES BUY ELECTORAL COMMISSION MORE
TIME

REF: A. ABIDJAN 503

[1](#)B. ABIDJAN 462

Classified By: Political Officer Tanya Salseth for reasons 1.4 (b) and
(d)

[1](#)1. (U) SUMMARY: On August 25, President Gbagbo signed three presidential decrees that give the Independent Electoral Commission (CEI) more time to produce and post the provisional electoral list. Although the provisional electoral list was originally scheduled to be published on August 29, the CEI now says it will be ready by September 15, and that the delay will not impact the November 29 date. In keeping with the electoral timeline, the CEI also opened registration for potential presidential candidates. END
SUMMARY

NEW PRESIDENTIAL DECREES

[1](#)2. (U) Although the Ivoirian electoral code states that the provisional electoral list must be published three months before presidential elections on November 29, election-related decrees that President Gbagbo signed on August 25 give added flexibility to the CEI to meet this and other deadlines. The decrees state that due to the special post-crisis nature of these elections:

- The provisional electoral list must be posted by October 29, or at least 30 days before elections are held.
- The definitive electoral list must be posted by November 14, or at least 15 days before elections are held.
- All voter cards must be distributed by November 21, or at least 8 days before elections are held.

PICKING UP THE PACE

[1](#)3. (C) Election preparations have noticeably picked up speed since late July when the CEI drew sharp criticism for failing to publish a detailed electoral calendar (reftel B) and missing the start date for processing voter registration data. The United Nations Operation in Cote d'Ivoire (UNOCI) reported on September 2 that all 70 coordination centers are now operational, and over half of the centers have completely finished all data scanning and digitization operations. SAGEM rep Fabien Rouaud told Poloff that all Abidjan data (which represent a significant portion of the 6.5 million petitioner forms collected during the identification process) have been scanned, digitized, and are ready for validation. Although the joint CEI - National Commission for the Supervision of Identification (CNSI) teams are not yet in place, CNSI rep Mamadou Cisse told Poloff that internal CNSI problems have been resolved, and field teams will start deploying on September 3.

[1](#)4. (C) While privately acknowledging that the August 29 deadline for publishing the provisional electoral list would likely slip, the CEI waited until the decrees outlined above were signed to announce publicly that the provisional electoral list will not be ready until September 15. CEI Commissioner Yacouba Bamba told Poloff on August 27 that the

commission believes elections can still take place on November 29 if -- and only if -- there are no snags. Citing the government's budgetary problems and erratic financing of the electoral process to date, Bamba expressed concern that lack of funding may prevent the CEI from completing all the tasks which must take place before elections are held. Technical experts at UNOCI and UNDP continue to insist that the November 29 election date is not feasible, because the tight deadlines do not allow adequate time to overcome significant technical and logistical hurdles. For example, under the election timetable, 38 days are allotted for challenges to the provisional electoral list. If this period is shortened, there could be a public backlash, although estimates as to its seriousness vary.

YOU TOO CAN BE PRESIDENT - FOR 20 MILLION

15. (U) On August 25, the CEI announced the opening of the registration period for presidential candidates. To deter frivolous registrations, the CEI is requiring a 20 million CFA deposit (approx \$43,500) from each potential candidate. As of September 3, the press reported that one independent candidate, Felix Akoto Yao, and former president and PDCI candidate Henri Konan Bedie have formally registered their candidacies. RDR leader Alassane Ouattara, who returned to Cote d'Ivoire September 2 from a three week stay in France, has yet to formally register. However, according to the electoral code, candidates will have until October 16 - 45 days prior to elections - to register.

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